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Public Affairs, Roger Williams University

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# State Council on the Arts Awards \$50,000 to Help Turn Vacant Bristol School into Arts and Culture Center

Roger Williams University plans to be anchor tenant in now-vacant Walley School on historic town common



A grant was awarded by the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts to renovate the historic Walley School in downtown Bristol into an arts and cultural hub, where RWU will rent space in the rehabilitated building for academic programming and community engagement activities.

January 20, 2017 | Public Affairs Staff

**BRISTOL, R.I.** – The Rhode Island State Council on the Arts is awarding a \$50,000 grant to Arts in Common, a new nonprofit that plans to renovate the long-vacant Walley School into an arts and cultural hub on the historic Town Common.

Roger Williams University is a partner in the project and plans to be the anchor tenant in the renovated building, which will provide public gallery space, shared office space for local cultural groups and a home for Arts in Common. RWU plans to use one floor for academic programming and community engagement activities.

The goal is to revive a historic, 19th-century school building located on the Town Common, demonstrating to Bristol residents the power of the arts to revitalize the social and civic life of the town common.

"Roger Williams University is delighted about the possibility of being an anchor tenant for a portion of the building," RWU Provost Andrew Workman said. "Doing so not only provides RWU students in visual arts a richer academic experience via access to local artists and cultural professionals but also supports this important local initiative and helps further community engagement."

"The State Arts Council is very pleased to support Bristol's Arts in Common initiative," said Randall Rosenbaum, executive director of the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts. "The collaboration between the artist collective and Roger Williams University will result in the reclamation of an important group of buildings, and will help to make Bristol a destination for artists and an arts-buying public. As we've seen elsewhere in Rhode Island, the return on this investment in the cultural life of Bristol will be good for the community, for the university and for the state."

Arts in Common Chairman Michael Rich, an RWU professor and program director of visual arts, said, "A revitalized and repurposed Walley School that integrates artists and arts organizations, students, and members of the community will serve Bristol's residents, increase collaboration between local organizations, generate economic activity, and foster appreciation of local historic and cultural assets."

Arts in Common is a collaboration between local artists and arts organizations, the town of Bristol, RWU and community members. It embraces and supports the shared goal to stimulate, make accessible and sustain arts activities and organizations that promote educational, economic and cultural growth.



The Arts in Common management team (left to right) are Marie Knapman, Rebecca Riley, Bradley Wester (sitting in front), Michael Rich, Donna Personeus, Doug Popovich, John Lusk, Nicole Downing, Craig Fisher and Stephan Brigidi.

#### ACADEMICS